

Nebraska's HHSS—
Ready to Respond

Nebraska's Health and Human Services System plays an important part in our homeland security efforts. We're working hard to strengthen our public health system and to protect against future threats.

Nebraska's Homeland Security plans address concerns unique to our state like geographical and cultural differences.

We've got the medical, technical and logistical expertise to detect and respond to emergencies and have modified our existing plans so we can effectively respond to any biological attack, infectious disease or public health emergency.



For example, HHSS has worked together with local and federal health agencies to develop smallpox response teams and vaccination plans. In the event of a smallpox emergency, our smallpox response team will provide health care, investigate cases and set up clinics. During a smallpox emergency, we will be able to protect each and every Nebraskan by inoculating them with a vaccine.



Nebraska was one of the first states to develop emergency smallpox plans. We were also one of the first to vaccinate a smallpox response team of health care professionals ready to respond to a smallpox emergency.

Learn More.

The threat of terrorism brings uncertainty. Knowing that Nebraska is alert and prepared to respond to an emergency turns uncertainty into safety and security.

Read and Listen to Reliable Information.

Should an act of terrorism occur, remember to remain calm. HHSS and your local health department will keep you updated and informed on what you should do next.



To learn more about bioterrorism, you can get reliable information from the following sources:

Nebraska's Health & Human Services System:

www.hhs.state.ne.us
(402) 471-3121

Nebraska's Homeland Security:

www.nol.org/home/LtGov/

U.S. Department of Homeland Security:

www.dhs.gov *and* www.ready.gov

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

(CDC) Public Health and Emergency

Preparedness and Response: www.bt.cdc.gov

**University of Nebraska Medical Center's
Bioterrorism Readiness and Response:**

www.unmc.edu/bioterrorism/

Help your family plan for emergencies with the

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org *and*

Federal Emergency Management Agency:

www.fema.gov

NEBRASKA HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM



*Helping people live better lives through
effective health and human services.*

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The Nebraska Health and Human Services System is committed to affirmative action/equal employment opportunity and does not discriminate in delivering benefits or services.

Nebraska & Bioterrorism: Ready to Respond



*"The salvation of the state
is watchfulness
in the citizen."*

Inscription, Nebraska State Capitol

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“Nebraska has really shown an enormous amount of foresight for responding to these new threats,” said Jerome M. Hauer, who is overseeing bio-terrorism planning at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “They really have become a model for other states.”

*“Nebraska on Mark in Biowar Defense”
Washington Post
Sunday, October 27, 2002*

NEBRASKA: READY TO RESPOND

Gov. Mike Johanns began efforts to coordinate the state’s response to disastrous events, including threats to the state’s infrastructure and health systems. In addition, the Health and Human Services System received bioterrorism-related grants from the federal government to increase epidemiological and laboratory capacity in Nebraska. In 2001, Gov. Johanns appointed Lt. Gov. Dave Heineman to head Nebraska’s Homeland Security efforts.

“We’re well ahead of the game in making sure we have expertise and plans in place to handle a statewide emergency,” said Gov. Johanns.

Developing, Improving Plans

The state’s emergency response efforts are broad-based. Many organizations are working together to develop new plans and improve existing ones. Agencies involved in Nebraska Homeland Security efforts include the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nebraska National Guard, Health and Human Services System, State Patrol, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Agriculture, Department of Roads, the State Fire Marshal, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). The local health departments and local emergency management agencies are also

important partners.

In Nebraska, people understand the concerns, the circumstances and the need for being prepared. We’ve been and are being very public about our

efforts. Here is the message we are sending to terrorists:

“We are prepared, and you will not be successful.”

Here’s What Nebraska has Done to Prepare

Coordinating with local, state, and federal resources is critical to providing effective responses to bioterrorism and other public health threats and emergencies. The federal government provides financial assistance to the states through grant funds to assist with bioterrorism response planning on the state and local levels.

Nebraska has used some of our federal grant money to:

- help fund the development of local health departments across the state to increase our surveillance and diagnostic capacities;
- establish the Bioterrorism Education Consortium, a partnership of the University of Nebraska's and Creighton University's Medical Centers, and the only one of its kind in the country;
- install more sophisticated laboratory equipment at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and in regional laboratories in rural Nebraska;
- work with the Department of Agriculture to increase capacity to detect and control bioterrorism in the agriculture arena;
- increase capacity to provide instant communications at times of crisis to the public and the media;
- provide support to the Omaha and Lincoln Metropolitan Medical Response Systems, local health agencies, all hospitals, and Community Health Centers;
- develop the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System to speed up the detection and reporting of infectious diseases—the only one in the country that is fully functional; *and*
- develop Nebraska’s Health Alert Network (HAN) to give us the capacity to provide immediate communications between local, state and federal officials and statewide healthcare professionals.

Using the HAN to Enhance Communications

Through the Health Alert Network (HAN) we can notify all health care providers, hospitals, and local health departments immediately by e-mail, telephone and fax, with important information about public health events. The Nebraska Health and Human Services System web site has links to the HAN and information on bioterrorism and other public health threats (www.hhs.state.ne.us/aftermath/bioterrorism.htm). We have special emergency web pages ready to activate in the event of a true public health emergency.



The threat of **terrorism** has unfortunately become a way of life in America. Equally unfortunate are the many tools terrorists have available to them, including bioterrorism. Bioterrorism is when terrorists intentionally release harmful bacteria, viruses or germs causing public health threats and emergencies. Bioterrorism is particularly disturbing because a biological attack could take days or weeks to notice, and, by that time, many people could be affected.

Coordinating Efforts

Long before the violent terroristic attacks of September 11, 2001, Nebraska was preparing and coordinating efforts to respond to emergency situations, including bioterrorism. In 1999,



Gov. Mike Johanns

Lt. Gov. Dave Heineman